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It is pretended that Lord Orrery confirmed the whole of this story, even to the having seen the butler raised into the air by the invisible beings who strove to carry him off, only he did not bear witness to the passage which seems to call the purchase of cards an unlawful errand.

RARE DISCOVERY,

ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER MOY, COUNTY OF MAYO.

(A fact.)

Not a hundred years ago, there lived on the banks of the noble river above named, a person who, though neither a very well educated man or profound naturalist, was—what is, perhaps, of more consequence in the eyes of the world—a wealthy farmer, and a justice of the peace for one of the neighbouring counties. It happened that his worship, who was in the frequent habit of visiting his numerous farms on this beautiful river, was obliged to cross a small stream in its vicinity, and, although on horse-back, he was apprehensive of wetting a portion of his dress, out of which he took no small pride, and which he denominated his “yalla-gaiters.” He, therefore, divested himself of those useful and ornamental appendages, and placing them across the shoulders of his horse, pursued his way, and after some time arrived at the town of Ballina. Here, to his great horror, he discovered that he had dropped his “yalla gaiters,” and was pondering on the propriety of returning immediately in search of them, when his magisterial attention was attracted by a crowd of gaping rustics assembled round the caravan of an itinerant Polito, on which were depicted, in glowing colours, the various animals contained within. The magistrate forced his way into the crowd, and got in front of the caravan just as the showman, who had been delivering to the bye-standers a long catalogue of attractions, summed all up by announcing a pair of fine alligators found on the banks of the Nile. “Yalla gaiters,” roared the magistrate, springing from his horse, and seizing the astonished showman by the collar, “you rascal, them is my yalla gaiters, give them up to me this minute, or, if you don’t, I’ll cram you into jail, for I’m a magistrate.” “Your alligators,” says the astonished and affrighted showman, “why them there alligators were found on the banks of the Nile?” “Found on the banks of the devil,” said the magistrate, “none of your thricks upon me, you rascal, I say they were found on the banks of the Moy, and they are my “yalla gaiters.” All the protestations of the poor showman as to his innocence would probably have been vain, had not a friend of the worthy justice, who happened to pass at the time, and who was better skilled in natural history, explained to him his mistake, on which he slipped a crown into the hand of the terrified showman, and desired him to say nothing about the matter. C.

THE IRISH FUNERAL CRY.

The well known custom so long used in this country, of keening, or lamenting over the dead, is of the most remote antiquity. History informs us, that it was known to the Greeks and Romans, who, however, seem to have borrowed it from the Eastern nations, among whom probably it had its origin; and from the Scriptures we learn that it was practised among the Israelites. Dr. O’Brien tells us, that the word in the Irish language, as originally and more correctly written, is *cine*, and not, as modern orthoëpists have it, *cuine*; and this makes it almost identical with the Hebrew word *cina*, which signifies lamentation or weeping with clapping of hands. The learned Jezreel Jones, in speaking of the Shillah or Tarmazeght, a language or dialect of the inhabitants of the mountainous part of south-western Barbary, in a letter to John Chamberlayne, dated “Westmonasterii, 24 Decembr. 1714,” declares that “the Shilhenses have the same custom as the Arabs, the Jews, and the Irish, of lamenting over the dead, uttering various cries of grief, tearing their hair, and asking the deceased why did he die? why did he leave them? and desiring that death would seize them also, in order that they might rejoin him whom they lamented.” According to an old work, Armstrong’s History of Minorca, the peasantry of that island in their lament, ask the dead “if he had not food, raiment, and friends—and wherefore then did he die?” Sir Walter Scott informs us that the *coronach* of the Highlanders is precisely similar to the *ullaloo* of the Romans, and the *ullaloo* of the Irish; that the words of it are not always articulate, but when they are so,

they express the praises of the deceased, and the loss the clan would sustain by his death.

The funeral song introduced in Shakspeare’s beautiful play of Cymbeline, where the scene is laid in Wales, upon the supposed death of the disguised Imogen, will, no doubt, recur to some of our readers.

From the fourth volume of the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy, we transcribe the following passages, descriptive of the ancient observance of the custom—

“The Irish have been always remarkable for their funeral lamentations, and this peculiarity has been noticed by almost every traveller who visited them; and it seems derived from their Celtic ancestors, the primæval inhabitants of this isle. Cambrensis, in the twelfth century, says, the Irish then musically expressed their griefs; that is, they applied the musical art, in which they excelled all others, to the orderly celebration of funeral obsequies, by dividing the mourners into two bodies, each alternately singing their part, and the whole at times, joining in full chorus.

“The body of the deceased, dressed in grave clothes, and ornamented with flowers, was placed on a bier, or some elevated spot. The relations and *keeners* (singing mourners) then ranged themselves in two divisions, one at the head, and the other at the foot of the corpse. The bards and croteries had before prepared the funeral caoinan. The chief bard of the head chorus began by singing the first stanza in a low doleful tone, which was softly accompanied by the harp: at the conclusion, the foot semichorus began the lamentation, or *ullaloo*, from the final note of the preceding stanza, in which they were answered by the head semichorus; then both united in one general chorus. The chorus of the first stanza being ended, the chief bard of the foot semichorus began the second *gol*, or lamentation, in which they were answered by that of the head, and as before, both united in the general full chorus. Thus alternately, were the song and the choruses performed during the night. The genealogy, rank, possessions, the virtues and vices of the dead were rehearsed, and a number of interrogations were addressed to the deceased: as, why did he die? If married, whether his wife was faithful to him, his sons dutiful, or good hunters or warriors? If a woman, whether her daughters were fair or chaste? If a young man, whether he had been crossed in love? or if the blue-eyed maids of Erin had treated him with scorn?”

In ancient times it was the duty of the bard, who was attached to the family of each chief or noble, assisted by some of the household, to raise the funeral song; but, at a more recent period, this has been entrusted to hired mourners, who were remunerated according to the estimation in which their talents were held. We are told that formerly the metrical feet of their compositions were much attended to, but on the decline of the Irish bards these feet were gradually neglected, and they fell into a kind of slipshod metre among the women who have entirely engrossed the office of keeners or mourners.

From Mr. T. Crofton Croker, the talented chronicler of many of our old legends and customs, we quote the following highly graphic account of the performance of a keener by profession of the present day:

“Having a curiosity,” he says, “to hear the *keen* more distinctly sung than over a corpse, when it is accompanied by a wild and inarticulate uproar as a chorus, I prevailed on an elderly woman who was renowned for her skill in keening to recite for me some of these dirges. This woman, whose name was Harrington, led a wandering kind of life, travelling from cottage to cottage about the country, and though in fact subsisting on charity, found every where not merely a welcome, but had numerous invitations on account of the vast store of Irish verses she had collected and could repeat. Her memory was indeed extraordinary: and the clearness, quickness, and elegance with which she translated from the Irish into English, though unable to read or write, is almost incredible. Before she commenced repeating, she mumbled for a short time, probably the beginning of each stanza to assure herself of the arrangement, with her eyes closed, rocking her body backwards and forwards, as if keeping time to the measure of the verse. She then began in a kind of whining recitation, but as she proceeded, and as the composition required it, her voice assumed a variety of deep and fine tones, and the energy with which many passages were delivered, proved her perfect comprehension and strong feeling of the subject; but her eyes always continued shut, perhaps to prevent interruption to her thoughts, or her attention being engaged by any surrounding object.

Till about the middle of the last century, the custom was